



# Congressional Record

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*Senate*

## IN RECOGNITION OF DR. KATHERINE ESTERLY

Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the achievements of Dr. Katherine Esterly. Kitty, as she is known to her friends, has had an enormous impact on the lives of countless people, many of whom were too young to even realize that she was helping them.

Dr. Esterly has dedicated her life to advancing the field of neonatology, which is the field of pediatric medicine that deals with the care of newborn infants. She has helped countless mothers-to-be and their young children by helping bring healthier babies to term and assisting those newborns who need a little extra care after their delivery. This work transcends the concepts of reduced healthcare costs and decreased infant mortality rates. It means healthier babies and stronger families and that is an accomplishment worthy of our praise and admiration.

Katherine Esterly grew up in Norristown, Pennsylvania, knowing that she wanted to work with children. After graduating from Temple University's medical school in 1951, she moved to Delaware to work towards that goal.

Delaware was truly blessed when she made this decision.

Despite her diminutive size and warm personality, Dr. Esterly has always approached her efforts to care for Delaware's babies with a steel will and an unwillingness to accept "no" for an answer. She demands high standards from her colleagues and has lived her life by this same commitment to excellence.

One of the hallmarks of her care is how she continually goes above and beyond the traditional role of simply caring for the newborn child. She uses a gentle hand and an open style of communication to develop a level of trust with parents that greatly improves their hospital experience during such difficult times. Whether it is a reassuring word or a simple explanation of a complex procedure, Kitty is always willing to do whatever it takes to assure parents that their newborn is receiving the best possible care.

Katherine Esterly became a practicing pediatrician in 1954 after completing her internship and residency at the Delaware Hospital. Dr. Esterly

then served as an associate in pediatrics for the Children's Bureau of Delaware from 1954 until 1968. During this time, Kitty worked tirelessly to help adoptive and foster children. In 1968, because of her outstanding record of leadership and her dedication to her profession, she was named director of this organization.

After the merger of community hospitals in Wilmington in 1967, the Medical Center of Delaware was formed and a new department of pediatrics was created. Unfortunately, there wasn't a neonatologist on staff at this new institution. Dr. Esterly took the initiative to get the necessary training so she could fill this void in the department's neonatal intensive care unit. She went on to become the director of the neonatology division in 1975. Throughout the 1980's, Dr. Esterly expanded the division and added additional full-time neonatologists to her staff, resulting in a world-class practice where even the sickest of newborns could be cared for.

Dr. Esterly also advanced the cause of nurses by working with colleagues and government officials to highlight and promote the qualifications of professional nurses. Her actions led to nurse practitioners being able to treat patients and write prescriptions, which greatly reduces the workload of practicing physicians and allows for greater responsibility on behalf of nurses.

In addition, Katherine Esterly helped create a neonatal nurse practitioner program for schools in Delaware and

New Jersey that continue to train the next generation of caregivers. Her ability and willingness to share her knowledge has ensured that future generations will continue the work that Kitty pioneered so many years ago.

In 1995, while serving as governor of Delaware, I appointed Dr. Esterly to serve as the chair of Delaware's Perinatal Board. In this capacity, she spearheads Delaware's efforts to promote the health and welfare of countless numbers of children. The First State and her children are better off because of her efforts.

Most recently, the Katherine L. Esterly Nursing Education Scholarship fund was established for the College of Health Sciences at the University of Delaware. When asked if she would allow her name to be used to distinguish this scholarship, Dr. Esterly, in her customary selfless fashion, not only agreed but also made a personal contribution to the very fund that now bears her name. Her generosity will help ensure that her legacy of caring for Delaware's youngest residents will be preserved and passed on to future generations of caregivers.

Kitty's dedication and innovation in the field of neonatology serves as an example to us all. I rise today to honor her achievements and to thank her on behalf of all Delawareans for her years of hard work, dedication and constant championing of Delaware's youngest residents.